

Commission on Human Rights

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights with Louisville and Lexington commissions urge legislators to amend House Bill 279 to protect civil rights

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Louisville and Lexington, KY USA , March 5, 2013 - The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, along with the Louisville Metro Human Relations Commission and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission, urge state legislators to amend House Bill 279 to guarantee the ability to enforce already-existing civil rights laws, which protect people from discrimination. The House passed the bill last week and it is now before the Senate.

House Bill 279, as amended, purports to protect individual religious freedoms by allowing individuals to “act or refuse to act in a manner motivated by a sincerely held religious belief...” On its face, the bill seems to support the rights of religious freedoms guaranteed by the national and state constitutions. However, upon closer examination, the legislation could be used by an individual or entity under the guise of a “sincerely held religious belief” to violate the constitutional and civil rights of other persons or organizations. In other words, it could make discrimination legal if the discrimination perpetrated is claimed to be due to “a sincerely held religious belief.”

For this reason, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights urges the Senate to amend HB 279 to include language that specifically allows for the enforcement of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act and all local ordinances, which are designed to guarantee the civil rights of all citizens.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is the authority that enforces for the Commonwealth of Kentucky the Kentucky Civil Rights Act, which makes discrimination illegal. The Louisville Metro Human Relations Commission and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission enforce local ordinances that also protect people in their regions from discrimination.

For more information or help with discrimination, contact the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights at 1.800.292.5566. The TDD telephone number is 502.595.4084. Visit the website for detailed information on the law and the commission's activities at kchr.ky.gov. From the homepage, link to the Facebook and Twitter pages, which provide civil rights-related news and announcements.